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Author(s): Dele Olowu

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The Literature on Nigerian Federalism: A Critical Appraisal

Dele Olowu
Obafemi Awolowo University

There is a large body of literature on federalism in Nigeria covering such major issues as the origins of Nigerian federalism, requisites of federalism, federalism versus other forms of association, the number of state units in the federal system, fiscal issues, political parties, distributional issues, and intergovernmental relations. However, a number of issues have received relatively little scholarly attention, including the economic aspects of Nigerian federalism, population movements and the federal arrangement, language policies, federal ethics, and various critical governmental and nongovernmental institutions. There is a need to establish institutions for the study of federalism in Nigeria and to reduce ethnic and ideological biases in research on Nigerian federalism.

The fact that Nigeria is regarded as Africa's only "federal" state commands the interest not only of political scientists but also of policymakers and all those concerned with the future of constitutional government in Africa. At the same time, however, the political history of the country (e.g., a civil war, periodic coups d'état aimed at civilian and military leaders, a declining economy, and the fact that many scholars see Nigeria as a unitary state) dilutes one's enthusiasm about the Nigerian federal system. Nevertheless, a large literature has accumulated on the Nigerian federal experience, authored both by Nigerians and by non-Nigerians from various perspectives. A fairly comprehensive, even though dated, listing can be found in Eme Awa¹ and Sam Egite Oyovbaire.²

Considering the fact that reasoned discussions of Nigerian federalism predate the formal adoption of a federal constitution in 1954, it is not easy to review this expansive and diverse literature. The problem is especially compounded by the fact that many writings, which do not specifically address Nigerian federalism, provide some important insights to students of the field. For instance, most of the disquisitions on Nigeria's constitution-making discuss the type and form of

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I wish to acknowledge the assistance of M. Okotoni, a graduate student in the Department of Public Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, in preparing this article. The article also benefited from extensive comments made by John Kincaid, Ladipo Adamolekun, and Elinor Ostrom, all of whom are based in the United States, and by Rotimi Suberu of the University of Ibadan.

¹Eme O. Awa, *Federal Government in Nigeria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 329-335.

²Sam Egite Oyovbaire, *Federalism in Nigeria: A Study of the Development of the Nigerian State* (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 285-294.

federalism appropriate for Nigeria.³ The literature on ethnicity, ethnic relations, and the civil war also presents interesting insights on Nigerian federalism.⁴ Moreover, some general books on Nigerian government and administration and on comparative federal systems devote substantial space to Nigerian federalism.⁵ Finally, there is a larger number of official documents and newspaper and magazine articles that constitute or document landmarks in the Nigerian federal experience.⁶ These are excluded from this analysis because of space limitations.

This article will focus only on those works which, in my opinion, make important contributions to the study of Nigerian federalism. The review thus focuses on some thirty books and monographs, including four special issues of the *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, that take Nigerian federalism or aspects of this subject as their central theme. The review also includes a number of "outstanding" articles, which have been cited regularly by other writers, have raised substantial controversy, or have treated an important but relatively neglected issue.

Perhaps the most striking observation to make about this rich literature, which has attracted a good mix of professionals—academics of various backgrounds, lawyers, and politicians, including those within the military—is the imbalance in the coverage of the literature. Whereas some issues have been discussed repeatedly, a number of other significant issues have been neglected. In the next section, I intend to highlight the issues that have preoccupied students of Nigerian federalism and also to mention some of the relatively neglected issues. Later, I shall proffer some explanations for this pattern.

DOMINANT ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

Eight issues can be regarded as high-profile issues in the study of Nigerian federalism: background to federalism, requisites of federalism, federalism versus other forms of association, units in the federal system, fiscal issues, political parties, distributional strategies (e.g., representativeness, merit, and federal character), and intergovernmental relations.

³Such works include Bernard Bourdillon, *A Further Memorandum on the Future Political Development of Nigeria* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1947); Walter J. Ofonagoro et al., eds., *The Great Debate: Nigerian Viewpoints on the Draft Constitution* (Lagos: Daily Times, 1978); Olusegun Obasanjo, *Constitution for National Integration and Development* (Lagos: Friends Foundation Publishers, 1989).

⁴On ethnic relations, see A. O. Sanda, ed., *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects* (Ibadan: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, 1976); Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980); Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). On the civil war and federalism, see Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) and John de St. Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War* (London: Hodder and Houghton, 1972).

⁵For example, Franklin Blitz, *The Politics and Administration of Nigerian Government* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1965); J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958); Oyeleye Oyediran, ed., *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule, 1966-79* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Billy J. Dudley, *Introduction to Nigerian Government* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

⁶The official documents include those connected with constitutional review, revenue allocation changes, and recommendations of study groups on theories related to the federal system (e.g., creation of new states and relocation of the federal capital).

Background to Federalism

The origins of Nigeria's federalism have been studied extensively by historians and political scientists. Five strong views have developed on this subject, each of which has drawn its own controversies. The first view suggests that federalism was imposed by the British colonialists on the eve of their departure in order to sustain their neocolonial links with politically independent Nigeria.⁷ A related, but different, view states that the logic of British colonial economic interests in occupied Nigeria favored a strategy of "divide and rule," a strategy that was corroborated by the infighting among British officials stationed in the different parts of Nigeria.⁸ Ballard's oft-quoted remark that if Nigerians were to leave Nigeria, British colonial officials would go to war against one another is quite revealing with respect to the latter part of this position.⁹

An alternative view argues that Nigeria's precolonial structures and the manner in which Britain conquered each of the kingdoms, states, and empires separately and negotiated separate treaties with each of them made a federal or confederal arrangement inevitable.¹⁰ A related view is that federalism was a compromise solution worked out among Nigeria's regionally based elites in order to ensure that the country earned political independence when it did. Finally, Chief Obafemi Awolowo has added a fifth viewpoint—the preference of Nigerians for federalism when the choice between federalism and unitarism was given to the representatives of the people in local, provincial, regional, and general conference assemblies between 1949 and 1950.¹¹

Others looking at the subject of federalism more theoretically have pointed to other factors (both centrifugal and centripetal) that predispose a country to federalism. Such studies have made use of the Nigerian experience to illustrate the relative importance of a military bargain¹² and of the ideology of federalism among a country's political leadership¹³ in creating and sustaining a federal system. In addition, historians and political scientists have analyzed the detailed historical antecedents to Nigerian federalism and the developments since independence.¹⁴

There is no unanimity on the relevance and relative importance of these factors. Oyovbaire, for instance, suggests that the precolonial structures were irrelevant to

⁷See, for instance, Toyin Falola, "The Evolution and Changes in Nigerian Federalism," *Federalism in a Changing World*, ed. Richard A. Olaniyan (Lagos: Office of the Minister for Special Duties, 1988), pp. 40-49.

⁸Jide Osuntokun, "The Historical Background of Nigerian Federalism," *Readings on Federalism*, eds. A. Bolaji Akinyemi, P. Dele Cole, and Walter Ofonagoro (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1979), pp. 91-102; and Oyovbaire, *Federalism in Nigeria*, pp. 34-37.

⁹J. A. Ballard, "The Administrative Origins of Nigerian Federalism," *Journal of Modern African Affairs* 70 (October 1971): 341.

¹⁰See Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 11.

¹¹Obafemi Awolowo, *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 11.

¹²William H. Riker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964).

¹³Thomas M. Franck, ed., *Why Federations Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1966).

¹⁴Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation-State* (Ibadan: Impact Publishers, 1985) and Uma O. Eleazu, *Federalism and Nation-Building: The Nigerian Experience* (Ifracombe, Nigeria: Stockwell, 1977).

the emergence of federalism in Nigeria.¹⁵ It is perhaps more useful to see all these factors as mutually reinforcing.

Requisites of Federalism

Two major issues have been raised by writers with respect to the requisites of federalism and the Nigerian experience. First, is federalism possible without popular democracy and a number of other institutions associated with it: political parties, regular elections, and all other expressions of Western democratic forms? The question becomes a potent one given the fact that Nigeria has been ruled for twenty out of the country's thirty years of political independence by the military. This issue is thus posed as that of compatibility between federalism and military rule.

Several scholars from within and outside Nigeria subscribe to the theory of incompatibility. Even though only one of Nigeria's military governments (the Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi government) sought to formally abrogate the federal system with his unfortunate Decree 34 (1966), which led to his overthrow and immediate repeal of the decree, many scholars point to the fact that unitarism has remained the intention of other military rulers. Although some of them, like Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and his co-plotters of the January 1966 coup (who thought the federal apparatus was clumsy and should be abolished) never had the chance to translate their intentions into action, those who did, after Ironsi, became more subtle about their designs.¹⁶ There are thus authors who maintained that the effect of military rule has been to turn Nigeria into a "unitary country in federal disguise."¹⁷ Some scholars have tried to argue that military rule alone cannot be held responsible for the evolution of a Nigerian unitary state; the oil boom and the civil war are other possible causes. To the extent that these developments coincided with military rule, however, there is substantial agreement among scholars that military rule has resulted in the supremacy of the federal government. One scholar asserts quite categorically that federalism died in Nigeria with the emergence of military rule in 1966.¹⁸ Another scholar has called our attention to the Janus-faced expectations of the military programs for transition to civilian rule: the use of military decrees to nurture the people into participatory democracy.¹⁹

Even the roles of the military as an institution and of some senior military personnel in the various coups d'état and the subsequent civil war have become highly controversial in terms of their contribution to the evolution of the Nigerian federal system.²⁰ Other scholars have pointed to the heavy costs of unitarism

¹⁵Oyovbaire, *Federalism in Nigeria*, p. 29.

¹⁶Adiele E. Afigbo, "The Nationality Question and the Federal System," *Federalism in a Changing World*, p. 259.

¹⁷Gavin Williams, ed., *State and Society in Nigeria* (Idanre, Nigeria: Afrografika, 1980), p. 100.

¹⁸Adedotun O. Phillips, "Fiscal Goals and the Revenue Allocation System," *The Nigerian Federal System: Administrative Problems Under Civilian and Military Governments*, ed. Dele Olowu (Syracuse, N.Y.: FACS Publications, 1991).

¹⁹Afigbo, "The Nationality Question and the Federal System," p. 259.

²⁰Wale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck, The Story of Nigerian Coups* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers, 1981); Ben Gbulie, *Nigeria's Five Majors: Coup d'Etat of 15th January 1966, First Inside Account* (Onitsha, Nigeria: African Educational Publishers, 1981); A. M. Mainasara, *The Five Majors—Why They Struck*

associated with military rule in a federal society such as Nigeria²¹ and especially to the problems associated with revenue allocation and quota systems.²²

On the other hand, there are those who have contended that military rule has not only been compatible with federalism in Nigeria, but also necessary to sustain the federal experience.²³ In a similar vein, in a long interpretative essay, Adele Jinadu conceded that at the formal or theoretical level "there is a strong connection between federalism and democracy," but went on to defend the position that forms can be confusing. What is important, according to him, are institutional structures that permit the free expression of thought and ideas irrespective of forms (such as a benevolent one-party or a military rule).²⁴

The other issue raised as a requisite of federalism is economic development. Is federalism compatible with underdevelopment? Some writers, such as Philip Mawhood,²⁵ affirm that, over time, Third World federal states either fragment into their component parts or become in reality unitary states. He gives two explanations for this viewpoint: (1) the newness of the nation-state and therefore political fragility and (2) the hardships associated with low economic development and the distribution of state resources. This makes survival the key political rule and federalism a luxury new states can ill-afford. However, Ursula Hicks suggests that while centrifugal factors might exert some influence during the early years of independence, the cohesive forces of industrialization and urbanization are likely to emerge and strengthen with economic advancement.²⁶

Federalism Versus Other Forms of Association

During moments of national crisis, debate has usually focused on the appropriateness of federalism as a system of governance for a country like Nigeria. Generally, there are four main schools of thought: the unitarists, the strong federalists, the weak federalists, and the confederalists. At times, it is not easy to distinguish between these various schools, partly because the protagonists of the

(Zaria, Nigeria: Hudahuda Publishing, 1982); D. J. M. Muffett, *Let the Truth Be Told* (Zaria, Nigeria: Hudahuda Publishing, 1982); J. Isawa Elaigwu, *Gowon—The Biography of a Soldier-Statesman* (Ibadan: West-books Publisher, 1986). See also, J. 'Bayo Adekanye, "Military Organization and Federal Society," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 16 (1981/82): 3-25.

²¹Daniel C. Bach, "Managing a Plural Society: The Boomerang Effects of Nigerian Federalism," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 27 (July 1989): 218-245; Larry Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism and the Struggle for Democracy," *Democracy in Developing Countries*, eds. Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour M. Lipset (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner, 1988), pp. 33-91; and Dele Olowu, "Centralization, Self-Governance and Development in Nigeria," *The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa*, eds. James S. Wunsch and Dele Olowu (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1990), pp. 193-227.

²²Adedotun O. Phillips, "State-Creation, Revenue Allocation and Nigeria's Development," *Management Development in Nigeria*, ed. Nigerian Institute of Management, vol. 2 (Akure, Nigeria: NIM, 1984), pp. 93-102.

²³Oyovbaire, *Federalism in Nigeria*, p. 273.

²⁴Adele Jinadu, "Federalism and Democracy," *Democratic Experiment in Nigeria: Interpretative Essays*, ed. Sam Egite Oyovbaire (Benin City, Nigeria: Omega Publishers, 1989), pp. 40-64.

²⁵Philip Mawhood, "The Politics of Survival: Federal States in the Third World," *International Political Science Review* 5 (1984): 521-531.

²⁶Ursula K. Hicks, "Introduction," *Federalism and Economic Growth in Developed Countries: A Symposium*, eds. U. K. Hicks, F. G. Carnell, J. R. Hicks, W. T. Newlyn, and A. H. Birch (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), pp. 13-15.

various schools have often changed sides. In extreme situations, each of the country's major "tribes" has threatened to secede from the rest of the country²⁷ and one has actually carried out this threat. The most dramatic turnabout in the crusade for one form of federalism or the other was to be seen during the talks among "opinion leaders" of regional groups after the coup of July 1966.

Between July 1966 and May 1967, Northern officers, led by Murtala Mohammed and General Yakubu Gowon, had initially canvassed for the North to break away from the union but then turned to press for a stronger, centralized federalism once they realized that control of the nation-state had passed to their side. Similarly, the Eastern Region elites who had pressed for a strong center during the First Republic later canvassed for confederalism and actually got a decree to that effect promulgated as Decree No. 8 (1967). Also, a civilian governor of one of the states controlled by the proscribed Unity Party of Nigeria, headed by Chief Bisi Onabanjo, led a campaign for confederalism after the party's massive defeat (its strongest support came from the Yoruba states) in the 1983 election. With the abortive coup of April 1990, the call for confederalism has been resuscitated. Kole Omotoso has perhaps captured the underlying reason for the preferences of Nigeria's political leaders for the various federal forms when he equated the federal political spoil to a "sumptuous pot of soup with mixed meat and fish."²⁸

Opeyemi Ola has raised some of the major obstacles to confederalism in Nigeria, citing the examples of previous experiences with confederalism in Europe and the United States. These include: the danger of confederalism degenerating into a system of competitive armament, problems of economic management, decisionmaking paralysis at the center, and the fact that a confederal arrangement would go against the grain of world history. In any case, he predicts that confederalism will most likely transform into dismemberment or federation.²⁹ In retrospect, however, the various demands for confederation in reality reflect the frustrations of some segments of the population with the functioning of Nigeria's federal system, especially given the absence of a nationally accepted, non-ethnic oriented political leadership at the center.

Units in the Federal System

A continuing issue in the study and practice of the Nigerian federal experience is the appropriate number of units, a question raised again in 1991. An early controversy among Nigeria's founding fathers was the number of units, with Nnamdi Azikiwe proposing ten units and Awolowo proposing eighteen units based on language groups.³⁰ Whereas the problem of a federal system that stood on an

²⁷Tekena N. Tamuno, "Separatist Agitations in Nigeria Since 1914," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 8 (December 1970): 563-584; and John A. A. Ayoade, "Secession Threat as a Redressive Mechanism in Nigerian Federalism," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 3 (Spring 1973): 57-74.

²⁸Kole Omotoso, *Just Before Dawn* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1988), p. 283.

²⁹Opeyemi Ola, "The Future of Nigeria: Federalism or Confederalism?," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 1 (1967): 4-6.

³⁰Dele Olowu, "Awolowo's Contribution to Nigerian Politics and Administration," *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era?*, eds. Olasope O. Oyelaran, T. Falola, M. Okoye, and A. Thompson (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 1988), pp. 582-594 and Osaghae, "Awolowo and Nigerian Federalism," *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era?*, pp. 526-562.

uneven tripod which defied John Stuart Mill's law of federal stability was roundly criticized,³¹ the creation of more state units since 1967 (from twelve to nineteen in 1976 and to twenty-one in 1987) without exhausting the demands for more states has led some scholars to doubt whether an end can be put to the periodic fragmentation of the state units.

Although the creation of more states has furthered the goal of national stability and decentralized political and administrative power in the country, it has also led, according to some observers, to imbalance in the share of national resources going to the major ethnic and minority groups and reduced the viability of state units and their capabilities.³² The real problem, however, is not small state units but the strongly centralized federal system, particularly the concentration of resources in the federal government. This, coupled with the fact that national resources are shared mainly on the basis of equity and need (roughly defined by population), explain the pressure for more state units.³³ Such demands are orchestrated and fueled by interclass and intra-elite competition for state resources.³⁴

On this basis alone, some scholars have even predicted that just as the stringent constitutional hurdles to the creation of new state units did not prevent the attempt to create new states during the Second Republic, similar efforts are likely to be made during the Third Republic.³⁵

Fiscal Issues

Until the establishment of a permanent Commission for Revenue Mobilization and Allocation in 1989, periodic ad hoc committees had been set up every five years by the government. The reports of these committees have proven important in terms of policy developments regarding tax jurisdictions, revenue transfers, and the principles for making such transfers among the various units of government. These reports themselves constitute a mine of information on Nigerian federal finances, but they have also stimulated very incisive writings from academics from within and outside the country.³⁶

³¹Kenneth C. Wheare, *Federal Government* (4th ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 50-51; and especially Billy Dudley, "Federalism and the Balance of Political Power in Nigeria," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 4 (1966): 16-29.

³²Phillips, "State-Creation, Revenue Allocation and Nigeria's Development"; Jadesola O. Akande, "The Minorities and the Challenge to Federalism," *Federalism in a Changing World*, pp. 219-237.

³³Victor Ayeni and Dele Olowu, "The Politics of Revenue Allocation and Intergovernmental Relations," *Nigeria's Second Republic: Presidentialism, Politics and Administration in a Developing State*, eds. Victor Ayeni and Kayode Soremekun (Lagos: Daily Times Publication, 1988), pp. 197-218.

³⁴Eme Ekekewe, *Class and State in Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1986).

³⁵Dean E. McHenry, Jr., "Stability of the Federal System in Nigeria: Elite Attitudes at the Constituent Assembly Toward the Creation of New States," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 16 (Spring 1986): 91-111; Bach, "Managing a Plural Society"; Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism and the Struggle for Democracy."

³⁶Adebayo Adedeji, *Nigerian Federal Finance: Its Development, Problems and Prospects* (London: Hutchinson Education Ltd., 1969); Adedotun O. Phillips, "Nigeria's Federal Financial Experience," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9 (October 1971): 389-408; Lawrence A. Rupley, "Revenue Sharing in the Nigerian Federation," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 19 (June 1981): 257-278. See also, Brian Smith, "Federal-State Relations in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 80 (July 1981): 355-378 and B. Faforiji, "Problems and Prospects of Nigeria's Federal Finance," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 22 (1987): 5-28.

One of the major controversies dominating the literature on this subject is the case for fiscal centralization, which Adebayo Adedeji made in his book.³⁷ One issue of the *Quarterly Journal of Administration* (1970) was virtually devoted to reactions from scholars and policymakers to Adedeji's book. Two full decades after this publication, however, more experts on the subject will perhaps agree with the misgivings of Sam Aluko³⁸ about the wisdom of fiscal centralization in Nigeria.

With the advent of economic reform and the creation of a permanent Revenue Allocation and Mobilization Commission, which had been advocated since the late 1960s, the nation seems set to address once again the challenge of "mobilizing" rather than "allocating" resources. A review of the criteria for allocating revenues such that greater preference is given to revenue mobilization seems necessary, especially at a time of deep economic and fiscal crisis, such as that now being experienced by the country.³⁹ There is consensus among experts on the subject that the state governments, with the possible exception of Lagos, have shown indolence and a lack of foresight in generating their own revenue sources because of their heavy dependence (up to 65 percent) on intergovernmental transfers.⁴⁰ There is, however, some controversy on the extent of fiscal centralization in the 1979 Constitution.⁴¹

Political Parties

The number, type, and leadership of Nigerian political parties have been the subject of much writing. So also have been analyses of Nigeria's national elections to date and of the performance of the various political parties at these elections.

Two important issues have concerned writers on political parties and the Nigerian federal system. The first issue has been how to foster political parties that will cut across ethnic boundaries in a deeply divided society such as Nigeria. The second issue has been the relationship between political parties and the government. This search has led to adventurous proposals, such as the zero-party option and the current experiment with political parties organized and administered by the state.

Once in power, parties have shown a tendency to use their power of incumbency lavishly to eliminate opposition parties in both the federal and the state arenas. It is this consideration that has led to the massive rigging of elections among all political parties and in virtually all the elections held to date. Several suggestions to counter this problem have been given, including a proposal for the military to supervise all elections in Nigeria.⁴² Another suggestion is the creation of special

³⁷Adedeji, *Nigerian Federal Finance*.

³⁸S. A. Aluko, "Nigerian Federal Finance: A General Review," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 23 (1970): 77-82.

³⁹Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Structural Adjustment Programme 1986-88* (Lagos: Federal Government Printer, 1986).

⁴⁰Phillips, "State-Creation, Revenue Allocation and Nigeria's Development"; Olu Akanle, *The Power to Tax and Federalism in Nigeria* (Lagos: Center for Business Executives, 1985); Dele Olowu, *Lagos State: Governance, Society and Economy* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1990).

⁴¹T. M. Okorodudu, "Nigeria: Analysis of Federal and State Taxing Powers," *The International Tax Journal* 2 (1985): 305-326 and Akande, "The Minorities and the Challenge to Federalism."

⁴²A. 'Bayo Adekanye, "Nigerian Armed Forces to Take Over Conduct of Elections," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 13 (1988): 27-38.

election tribunals for all election cases without involving the regular courts.⁴³ A recent government report also suggested the need for the involvement of all contending political parties in the appointment of members of the election commission.⁴⁴

One other matter that worried political observers during the First Republic was the arrangement whereby political party leaders sent their subordinates to represent their parties' interest in the federal government while they themselves stayed in their respective regions. This concern led to the further strengthening of the federal government and especially the presidency under the constitution of the Second Republic, but the intense competition for the prize position of the presidency during the Second Republic turned out to be one of the fundamental flaws of that second experiment in civilian rule.⁴⁵

Distributional Strategies: Representativeness, Merit, and Federal Character

The various strategies for dealing with inter-ethnic competition are among the most lively issues in Nigerian federalism today. They have received considerable scholarly attention, first in the newspapers and later as articles,⁴⁶ but there are now book-length studies on the subject.⁴⁷

Adele Jinadu has identified four categories of affirmative action measures in the Nigerian milieu.⁴⁸ These are (1) measures designed to eliminate certain barriers, such as discriminatory rules, (2) hidden biases in access routes for some ethnic groups, which are inherent in the basic institutional arrangements of the state, (3) measures that give some ethnic-group members access to institutions where they would not have been admitted through competitive selection processes, and (4) proportional representation for ethnic groups.

These strategies are based largely on a perception of educational imbalance between some states regarded as "educationally disadvantaged"⁴⁹ and others regarded as educationally advantaged. Although representativeness is held to be valuable for ensuring fairness and balance, there is no agreement on what should be the unit of representation (north/south, the states, or the 250 or more ethnic groupings), or whether representativeness should be carried out at the expense of

⁴³P. A. Oluyede, "An Appraisal of Election Petition Procedures," *Nigerian Current Legal Problems*, ed. T. Akinola Aguda (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, 1985), pp. 1-23.

⁴⁴Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Report of the Judicial Inquiry into the 1983 Elections* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1986).

⁴⁵See Ladipo Adamolekun, *The Fall of the Second Republic* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1985); Toyin Falola and Julius Ihonvbere, *The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic, 1979-84* (London: Zed Books, 1985); S. Mohammed and T. Edoh, *A Republic in Ruins* (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University, 1986); and Victor Ayeni and K. Soremekun, *Nigeria's Second Republic* (Apapa, Nigeria: Daily Times, 1988).

⁴⁶Alex Gboyega, "The 'Federal Character' or the Attempt to Create Representative Bureaucracies in Nigeria," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 50 (1984): 17-24.

⁴⁷Ukwu I. Ukwu, *Federal Character and National Integration in Nigeria* (Kuru: Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, 1987); Peter P. Ekeh and Eghosa E. Osaghae, eds., *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1989).

⁴⁸L. Adele Jinadu, "Federalism, the Consociational State, and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 15 (Spring 1983): 71-100.

⁴⁹Emmanuel A. Yoloye, "Federal Character and Institutions of Higher Learning," *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria*, pp. 47-79.

merit. The constitutional stipulations on this matter remain ambiguous and the subject of much controversy with respect to educational places, civil service positions, admissions into the armed forces, and the sharing of political offices among political parties.⁵⁰

The problem of ethnic balance is compounded by the association of the various ethnic groups with particular religious affiliations, a fact which has not been settling for the federal system.⁵¹ On closer examination, some of these facile associations belong to the realm of myth rather than fact. There are probably as many Muslims in southern Nigeria as there are Christians in northern Nigeria. However, the volatile nature of religion in the country's federal politics probably informed the decision of the National Population Commission not to include either "tribal origins" or "religion" as part of the entries in the population census of 1991.

Intergovernmental Relations

The relationship between the federal and state governments has been a well established interest of various scholars.⁵² Although this relationship has long been regarded as part of the normal pattern of interactions in a federal system, the increasing recognition of local governments as a third tier of government since 1976 has popularized the concept and expanded the dimensions of intergovernmental relations in Nigeria. Two issues have dominated the discussions on intergovernmental relations in Nigeria: finance and management. Other issues, such as foreign policy and the legal implications of intergovernmental relations, have also received some attention.⁵³

Relationships among governments in Nigeria generally tend to be vertical rather than horizontal, and have alternated between hierarchical subordination under military rule and conflict under civilian regimes. How to mediate these conflicts in view of the limitations of the courts in such matters remains a central problem

⁵⁰David D. Laitin, "The Sharia Debate and the Origins of Nigeria's Second Republic," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 20 (September 1982): 411-430; Raymond Hickey, "The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note," *African Affairs* 83 (April 1984): 251-256.

⁵¹Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene, "Ethnic Engineering and the 'Federal Character' of Nigeria: Boon of Contentment or Bone of Contention?," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6 (1983): 457-476; Ukwu, *Federal Character and National Integration*; Ekeh and Osaghae, *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria*; and Ladipo Adamolekun, John Erero, and Basil Oshionebo, "'Federal Character' and Management of the Federal Civil Service and the Military," 75-88.

⁵²See Ladipo Adamolekun, *Public Administration: Nigerian and Comparative Perspective* (London: Longman, 1983), chap. 8; Ladipo Adamolekun, "The Idea of Local Government as a Third Tier of Government Revisited," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 18 (1984): 113-138; Alex Gboyega, "Intergovernmental Relations in Nigerian Local Government and the Nigerian Constitution," *Public Administration and Development* 1 (1981): 281-290; Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Report on the Management of Intergovernmental Relations in Federal Systems* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1983); and four special issues of *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, 1969 (no. 1), 1970 (no. 4), 1976 (no. 10), and 1980 (no. 14).

⁵³Perceptive writings on foreign policy and legal/constitutional implications include: A. Bolaji Akinyemi, *Foreign Policy and Federalism* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1974); L. O. Aremu, "Intergovernmental Relations: A Legal Overview," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* 14 (1980): 133; Ben O. Nwabueze, *Federalism Under the Presidential Constitution* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1983); and Jadesola Akande, *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1982).

of the Nigerian federal system under civil authorities. One important recommendation, which has resulted from the analysis of scholars interested in this subject, is the need for an independent advisory commission on intergovernmental relations.

NEGLECTED ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

The neglected issues in the study of Nigerian federalism fall into two broad groups: those that are treated superficially and those that are not broached at all. Several of the issues mentioned here belong to the first category.

Economic Aspects of Nigerian Federalism

There is a tendency for economists writing on Nigerian federalism to focus mainly on fiscal matters. Yet issues such as economic planning in a federal state and the political economy of federalism have also attracted some attention.⁵⁴

However, few writers have explored the relationships between federalism and regional growth, inter-regional trade, and economic complementarities between the various units of the Nigerian state. The few who have done so inform us that there are substantial "interstate complementarities (interdependencies) in food production and trade."⁵⁵ Similarly, the economic policies of the various state governments and their implications for economic activity in the various sectors have been poorly explored.⁵⁶ There are three possible reasons for this situation: (1) the preoccupation of scholars with the role of the national government in economic development within the federal system, (2) the nonexistent regional data base, and (3) the relative unimportance of state and local governments in resource mobilization and allocation.⁵⁷

Two other economic issues that ought to engage the attention of writers are: the economic implications of operating a centralized federal system and the economic prerequisites for the successful operation of a federal system of government. Developments in such areas as small-scale industry and privatization are poorly linked to reflections and writings on the federal system.

⁵⁴Ojetunji Aboyade, "Relations Between Central and Local Institutions in the Development Process," *Nations By Design: Institution Building in Africa*, ed. Arnold Rivkin (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), pp. 83-118; F. A. Olaloku et al., eds., *Structure of the Nigerian Economy* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Gavin Williams, "Nigeria: A Political Economy," *State and Society in Nigeria*, ed. G. Williams (Idanre, Nigeria: Afrografika, 1980), pp. 22-67; D. Rimmer, "Elements of the Political Economy," *Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria*, ed. Keith Panter-Brick (London: Frank Cass, 1978), pp. 141-165.

⁵⁵J. O. C. Onyemelukwe, M. O. Filani, and S. I. Abumere, "Interstate Trade in Major Foodstuffs of Nigeria," *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies* 19 (1977): 334.

⁵⁶E. C. Anusionwu, "Management of Industrial Location Through Public Infrastructure Development: The Nigerian Experience," *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies* 20 (1988): 351-378.

⁵⁷O. Adegbola, "Statistics for Regional Development: The Nigerian Case," *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies* 25 (1983): 1-24; and Dele Olowu, "State-Level Governments and the Development Process: A Case-Study of Lagos State," *Managing Nigeria's Economic System: A Book of Readings*, ed. Eno L. Inanga (Lagos: Centre for Management Development, 1985), pp. 36-65.

Federalism and Population Movements

Even though a few scholars have commented on the linkage between Nigerian federalism and population, especially the problem of having population censuses that are devoid of controversy and acrimony from the colonial period up to the present time, much of the research and writing on population distribution (urban/rural configuration) and movement have not been related to the federal system.⁵⁸ The original work of Falola and Olanrewaju on Nigerian transport systems, for instance, was not directly related to the federal system.⁵⁹

Yet the structure of the Nigerian federal system is being constantly changed by population structure, growth, and movements, and by improved transportation networks. In turn, these variables are affected by the structure of the Nigerian federal system.⁶⁰

Language and Federalism

Even though some references are made to the problems of languages and a *lingua franca* in the popular press, there have been few scholarly writings on the subject.⁶¹ Alternatives that have been proposed to English as the *lingua franca* include: Hausa, Swahili, and an amalgam of Hausa/Yoruba/Igbo, *Wazobia* (the word for "come" in each of the three main languages). Another strong candidate for a *lingua franca* has been "pidgin."⁶²

Two considerations have dominated popular debates on language. Some observers believe that to the extent that language is a vehicle of culture, the use of the English language, especially in a circumstance in which the majority of Nigerians are illiterate, detracts from the cultural adjustments regarded as essential for mutual understanding across the various ethnic units. Others feel that a *lingua franca* will serve as an important symbol of unity throughout Nigeria.

One of the earliest discussions of language and federalism includes Awolowo's theory of "linguistic determinism."⁶³ Even though there has been substantial controversy about the number of state units, there is a substantial agreement among the major linguistic/cultural groups (i.e., Yorubas, Hausa-Fulanis, and Igbos) that language should be one of the major considerations in creating new units and that the languages spoken by these three groups should be recognized as national

⁵⁸See S. A. Aluko, "How Many Nigerians? An Analysis of Nigeria's Census Problems, 1901-63," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 3 (October 1965): 371-392; and Aderanti Adepoju, "Military Rule and Population Issues in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 80 (January 1981): 29-47.

⁵⁹Toyin Falola and S. A. Olanrewaju, eds., *Transport Systems in Nigeria* (New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1986).

⁶⁰Akin L. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (London: University of London Press, 1968); Harry A. Green and Olatunde J. B. Ojo, "Federalism and Urban Governance in Nigeria," *Readings on Federalism*, pp. 213-237; Dele Olowu, "Twenty Years of Urban Administration in Nigeria," *Nigerian Public Administration 1960-1980: Perspectives and Prospects*, ed. Ladipo Adamolekun (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books, 1985), pp. 167-182; and Lillian Trager, "Rural-Urban Linkages: The Role of Small Urban Centers in Nigeria," *African Studies Review* 31 (December 1988): 29-38.

⁶¹Bisi Afolayan, "The Language Question in the Concept of Federalism," *Federalism in a Changing World*, ed. R. A. Olaniyan (Lagos: Office of the Minister for Special Duties, 1988), pp. 262-278.

⁶²Ike S. Ndolo, "The Case for Promoting the Nigerian Pidgin Language," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 27 (December 1989): 679-684.

⁶³Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigeria's Constitution*, pp. 89-105.

languages. The 1979 Constitution provides that when necessary arrangements are made, any of these three languages can be used in the nation's legislatures. Not surprisingly, minority groups have strongly opposed this principle, but the provision on the subject has been retained in the 1989 Constitution.⁶⁴

Critical Governmental and Nongovernmental Institutions

One can understand why some institutions, which are regarded as critical to the federal arrangement, have been poorly studied in Nigeria. The long years of military rule have not made the study of such institutions as the judiciary, legislative assemblies, and the police as attractive as it should be.⁶⁵ As a result, policy choices on these subjects have been poorly informed. For instance, as Oyeleye Oyediran points out in a recent article, the reduction of the status of the legislature vis-a-vis other branches of government in the Third Republic constitution (e.g., part-time appointment, absence of legislative staff support, and reduced days of sitting) do not forebode well for the Third Republic.⁶⁶ Similarly, the paucity of scholarship on the police alone probably explains why the decision to centralize the country's police system has not been reexamined. According to Jadesola Akande, minority interests have continued to suffer under the centralized police arrangement.⁶⁷ Other observers have confirmed that virtually all the problems associated with local authority police systems (e.g., corruption, repression of minorities, poor motivation, and the like) have been aggravated by the decision to centralize.⁶⁸

In contrast to the impact of these governmental institutions on the federal system, the role of nongovernmental institutions—professional associations of lawyers, students, university staff, labor, church groups, community development agencies, and other informal groups—which has been very crucial in the struggle for sustaining economic growth and federal democratic principles against arbitrary and authoritarian military and civilian governments, belongs to the second category of neglect.

Other issues that have not received adequate attention include the press, leadership, and the citizenship/nationality question as they relate to Nigerian federalism. For instance, whereas state citizenship is the basis of ethnic represen-

⁶⁴Section 53 of the 1989 Constitution states: "The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba where adequate arrangements have been made therefore." Federal Republic of Nigeria, "The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Promulgation Decree 1989," *Federal Government Gazette* 76 (1989): A95. See also, "Nigeria: The Language Questions," *Newswatch* (Lagos), 20 March 1989.

⁶⁵The few exceptions include Oyeleye Oyediran, *Nigerian Legislative Houses—Which Way?* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Consultancy Services, 1980); T. Akinola Aguda, *The Judiciary in the Government of Nigeria* (Ibadan: New Horn Press, 1983); and Tekena N. Tamuno, *The Police in Modern Nigeria, 1861-1965* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970).

⁶⁶Oyeleye Oyediran, "The Role of the Legislature in the 1989 Constitution: A Plea for Re-Examination," *The Guardian* (Lagos), 27 and 28 July 1990 (serialized in two parts).

⁶⁷Akande, "The Minorities and the Challenge to Federalism," *Federalism in a Changing World*, p. 223.

⁶⁸See, for instance, Olu Akanle, "The Problems of the Maintenance of Law and Order in a Federation with Particular Reference to Nigeria," *Nigerian Current Legal Problems*, ed. T. A. Aguda, vol. 1 (Lagos: Nigerian Institute for Advanced Legal Studies, 1985), pp. 24-55; and E. O. Rotimi, "A History of Native Administration Police Forces in Nigeria, 1900-1970." (Ph.D. Diss., Obafemi Awolowo University, 1990).

tation in fulfilling the federal character clause (one of the most important innovations of the 1979 and 1989 Constitutions), none of these constitutions define what constitutes citizenship. As a result, citizenship is conventionally conferred by birth, not residence. This has led to discriminatory practices that many observers regard as odious for the Nigerian federal system. The present military administration set up a high-powered committee on the issue, but the findings of this committee are still shrouded in secrecy and in any case are not part of the Constitution.⁶⁹

Yet, Daniel J. Elazar explains that state or local citizenship can coexist with national citizenship, as in the Swiss and, to some extent, United States federal systems.⁷⁰ This is one issue yet to be fully articulated in Nigeria. Similarly, a fuller examination of such subjects as the impact of the press and political leadership on the Nigerian federal system might prove quite enlightening.

Federal Ethics

This is one issue that also belongs to the second category of neglect. Analysts have tended to concentrate on the role of constitutional legislation and power as the key factors shaping and reshaping the Nigerian federal system. To the perceptive observer, however, it is not difficult to see that the problem of Nigerian federalism does not lie so much with constitutions and the power structure, but with the absence of a culture of understanding, self-restraint, mutual respect, and appreciation, which are essential for the successful operation of a federal system of government. According to Elazar, the preference for consensus and negotiation rather than the power to threaten coercion is one of the most important prerequisites of federalism.⁷¹

This requirement led Alexis de Tocqueville to argue that the complicated nature of a federal system and the necessity to develop an ethic or culture of federal coexistence precluded the adoption of federalism in many nations, especially underdeveloped nations.⁷² Vincent Ostrom has expounded on the elements of this culture of a federal system.⁷³

Even though these normative issues have also been neglected in the social sciences, generally because of the strong preference for positivism, none of the few writings on political or administrative ethics have related their discussion to the federal system.

FACTORS CONDITIONING THE LITERATURE ON FEDERALISM

We might now pose the question: What factors have produced the imbalance in the study of the Nigerian federal system?

⁶⁹Ishaya A. Shekarri, "The National Question" (Paper presented at the national seminar on Integrated Rural Development, Lagos, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures, 1989).

⁷⁰Daniel J. Elazar, *Exploring Federalism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p. 188.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷²Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Doubleday ed.; New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 164.

⁷³Vincent Ostrom, *The Political Theory of a Compound Republic: Designing the American Experiment* (2nd ed.; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

One preeminent factor seems to be the vantage points of the various authors. These vantage points can be their profession (politics, academia, business, the press, the civil services, and the like) or, more importantly, their particular disciplines. This is the case with Nigerian and non-Nigerian writers alike. Aspects of some disciplines as they touch on federalism have been poorly researched, but these reflect the poverty of the discipline or the subdiscipline itself.

Another major factor is ethnicity. My survey of the literature does not confirm that ethnicity has been a crucial factor in the biases of scholars and writers on the subject. I have noted this point indirectly with respect to the controversy on confederalism and secession. Politicians from the various parts of Nigeria have shown considerable opportunism in canvassing for confederalism, secession, and federalism, depending on their position in the scheme of things.

It is difficult to accept on the basis of the existing scholarship that the positions of the disputants in the numerous controversies on the federal system can be explained in terms of ethnicity. Ideology⁷⁴ or professional commitments⁷⁵ may be factors as well. Adigun Agbaje has attempted to demonstrate that ethnicity does not explain the orientations and biases of the Nigerian press. What is crucial, according to him, are the biases of the owners. These biases may take on ethnic connotations, but they are not necessarily based on ethnicity.⁷⁶

There are, however, two important respects in which ethnicity may have influenced some of the Nigerian literature on federalism. First, the minorities have tended to favor a strongly centralized federal arrangement able to counterbalance the interests of the major tribal groups.⁷⁷ Second, the writings on the civil war, especially by some Igbos, reflect ethnic biases.⁷⁸ Even the postwar writings of Chinua Achebe and B. O. Nwabueze⁷⁹ give strong expression to the grievances of Igbo elites against a state structure in which the Igbos have only two states as against five each for the Husa/Fulani and Yoruba groups. Opinion statements in the press by politicians also reflect ethnic biases.⁸⁰

One other important factor that explains the imbalance in the literature is the elite conception of development and the most appropriate strategy for achieving social and economic development. At least up to the mid-1970s, the consensus of most

⁷⁴Y. Bala Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Vanguard, 1987).

⁷⁵See, for instance, Ali D. Yahaya, *The Native Authority System in Nigeria, 1950-1970* (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980) in respect of Northern traditional elites; and Ben Nwabueze, *Our March to Constitutional Democracy*, Guardian Lecture Series, *The Guardian* (Lagos), March 1989, for an appraisal of the military elites.

⁷⁶Adigun Agbaje, "Mass Media and the Shaping of Federal Character: A Content Analysis of Four Decades of Nigerian Newspapers (1950-1984)," *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria*, pp. 98-127.

⁷⁷This seems evident in the writings of Billy Dudley. See also, Dennis C. Osadebey, *Building a Nation: An Autobiography* (Lagos: Macmillan, 1978).

⁷⁸Chidi Amuta, "The Nigerian Civil War and the Evolution of Nigerian Literature," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 17 (1983): 85-99.

⁷⁹Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (London: Heinemann, 1983); Ben O. Nwabueze, *Federalism Under the Presidential Constitution* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1983), p. 307.

⁸⁰See Ekekwe, *Class and State in Nigeria* and F. I. Elah, *Nigeria and State Creation* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Elah & Sons, 1983).

scholars studying the Nigerian federal system was either to abolish the federal system in favor of a unitary government (an important factor that led Aguiyi-Ironsi to his disastrous flirtation and adventure with unitarism) or to create a much stronger federal system. After so many years of military rule, few people will dispute that Nigeria has made the transition from a peripheralized to a strongly centralized federal system.⁸¹ However, the country has had to live with the serious economic, political, and administrative implications of such centralism, which I have itemized and elaborated elsewhere.⁸²

Another bias among the Nigerian elites who have produced most of the literature assessed here is the preoccupation with the problems of Nigerian federalism. The opportunities, prospects, and challenges of a federal system of government in a rapidly modernizing nation-state have not been fully examined. This in itself has contributed to the poor quality of the debate and policy choices with respect to the Nigerian federal system. How else can one explain the fact that the two constituent assemblies convened to discuss the draft constitution of the country in 1977 and 1987 were not allowed to fully debate the federal aspects of the constitution—because these were regarded by the military authorities as given or “no-go” areas? Also, how else can one explain the facts that the increasing homogenization of Nigerian society and the economic complementarities among the various ecological and economic regions of the country have not attracted serious scholarly attention?

A final bias, and one which is especially pertinent, is the influence of governments in dictating the nature and direction of research. This is an important issue because most of the studies under consideration were either sponsored or semi-sponsored by government.

The crisis of the state in which the Nigerian federal system finds itself today may be the appropriate opportunity to defy the ban imposed on the necessary debate on the future of federalism in Nigeria. Elements of the crisis of the Nigerian federal state abound in the large number of uncompleted projects, the poor maintenance of infrastructures, the inability to obtain an accurate census of the population, the suffocating pressure for more states and more local government units, and the preoccupation with sharing the jobs, salaries, and institutions of a highly centralized federal state. The healthy rivalry and competitiveness among units within a federal system, which Chief Awolowo perceived as “the soul of development and progress,”⁸³ has been painfully destroyed.⁸⁴

⁸¹Smith, “Federal-State Relations in Nigeria,” 378.

⁸²Dele Olowu, “Centralization, Self-Governance and Development in Nigeria,” pp. 211-220.

⁸³Awolowo, *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution*, p. 57. For some evidence, see the following special coverage of *Newswatch* (Lagos): “Nigeria: Highways to Hell—Federal Roads Nationwide Have Become Obstacles to Movement,” 23 November 1987 and “Wasted Billions: Abandoned Projects in Nigeria,” 7 December 1987.

⁸⁴See also, Daphne A. Kenyon and John Kincaid, eds., *Competition Among States and Local Governments: Efficiency and Equity in American Federalism* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1991).

CONCLUSION

Nigerian federalism has become a fertile ground for much writing by various social scientists. The studies conducted by academics, politicians, and policymakers of various persuasions have shed some light on many major issues. In some cases, however, dark patches remain even in areas already studied by many scholars. A number of important subjects, especially those involving the centripetal forces in the federal system, have either been neglected or studied only superficially.

As we approach the fortieth anniversary of the emergence of federalism as a major political principle in Nigeria, there is very little cause for cheer. Nevertheless, there is much promise in the future of the Nigerian federal system. This promise can be realized by a combination of responses from the political and intellectual elites. Political elites (both military and civilian) must appreciate the need for more openness, discussion, negotiation, and tolerance in relating to one another. Much more investment should be put into human resources development (the basic services and especially basic education), but such services are better delivered through decentralized and noncentralized governing structures. Incentives should be put in place to stimulate regional and state economic competitiveness and complementarity.

It is surprising that there is not one center among Nigeria's thirty-one universities dedicated to the study of federalism. One or two centers should be nationally recognized for this purpose. Such a center would provide the needed initiative for networking on the subject among researchers and research institutions. All of the foregoing underscore the need to revisit the case made almost a decade ago for an advisory body (e.g., the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations in the United States) dedicated to the systematic study, analysis, and monitoring of the Nigerian federal system.⁸⁵ It is understood that such a body was almost created just before the military struck in 1983. The period of transition to civilian rule or the Third Republic itself present particularly good opportunities to broach the subject again.

If, in addition to all these, the suffocating centralist structures of the Nigerian federal system are carefully reviewed so that noncentralized, decentralized, and accountability structures play more visible roles, Nigerian federalism may yet become a model that many African countries will begin to consider with interest. Ultimately, the Nigerian experience may become an important one that not only demonstrates the feasibility of federalism in Third World contexts, but the universal necessity for the application of federal principles in complex societies such as Nigeria.

⁸⁵Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Report on the Management of Intergovernmental Relations in Federal Systems*, p. 33.